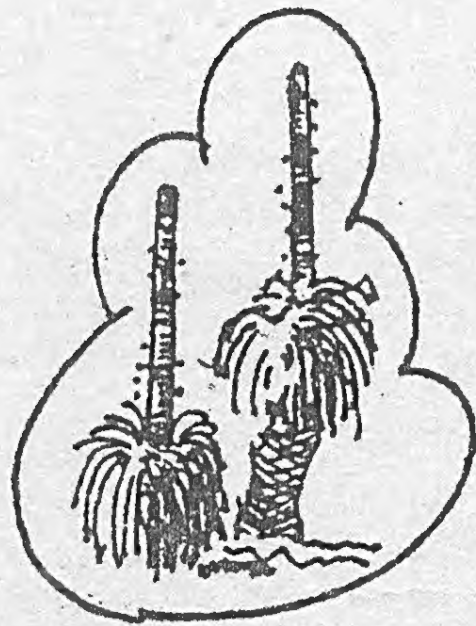


BALLARAT FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

EXCURSION/NEWS SHEET - MARCH 1978



President: Mr. G. Binns Ph. 323670
Vice-Pres: Mr. L. Fink 861319
Secretary: Miss H. Burgess 312210
Treasurer: Mr. S. Reynolds 327721

Meetings held in the Administrative Building at the School of Mines, Lydiard St. Sth., first Friday of each month at 8 p.m.

MEETING: 3rd March - Annual Meeting. Instead of Mr. J. Brisbane as previously advertised, Dr. J. Edgar of the School of Forestry, Creswick, will speak on 'research and problems associated with the spread of the Armillaria specie at Mt. Cole. Mr. Brisbane will attend the May meeting.

MEETING: 7th April - Mr. R. Allen - Subject "Survival in the Insect World".

EXCURSION 5th March - Canadian Forest. 1.30 from Crockers.

APRIL EXCURSION: The Bird Observer's Club is holding a Camp-Out at Melville Caves, north of Dunolly the week-end of 15/16 April. Our April excursion will coincide with this. Further information in the next issue.

PHOTOFLORA. '78.

A ninety minute screening of top quality
AUSTRALIAN NATURE PICTURES.

FLOWERS AND PLANTS

BIRDS AND WILDLIFE

MONDAY 20th MARCH, 8 p.m.

Assembly Hall, Ballarat North Technical School, Norman St.
Presented by the Native Plants Preservation Society of
Victoria in conjunction with the BALLARAT FIELD NATURALISTS'
CLUB.

Trading table of native plants.

MEMBERS NIGHT.

Members attending the February meeting were unanimous in agreeing that the Staff Room at the School of Mines was a great improvement as a meeting place for our future endeavours. Several visitors and prospective members were welcomed by President, Mr. Greg. Binns.

Two of our members showed slides to illustrate their talks. Firstly Mr. & Mrs. S. Reynolds "took" us to a cattle station on the Simpson Desert, south east of Alice Springs, where they stayed last October. It is a Brahmin Cattle Stud and a few tourists are catered for and shown the station in four-wheel drive cars and four-seater planes.

The heat was intense, the ironstone, forming the gibber desert, were too hot to touch during the day and they shone like marbles, being worn smooth by the drifting sands. The homestead was cool with the aid of air-conditioning and a wide verandah, and set in a veritable oasis. The soil in the vegetable garden is replaced annually because of the build up of sodium. All the soil needs is water - the vegetables looked very healthy.

From the air the parallel ridges of red and green formed by the sand hills and vegetation looked like a market garden. Water birds were seen in stretches of water, larger than Lake Burrumbeet, due to thunderstorm water trapped by the sand dunes.

Mr. L. Fink showed slides of fungi, moths and orchids to be found at various times of the year in the Brisbane Ranges. The orchids included *Caladenia carnea* (pink fingers), *Caleana major* and *C. minor* (flying duck), *Pterostylus vittata*, *P. pusilla* and *P. barbata* (greenhoods), *Orthoceras strictum* (horned orchid), *Prasophyllum nigricans*, *P. odoratum* and *P. morrisii* (midge orchids).
H. Burgess.

W.V.F.N.C.A. CAMP-OUT - Castlemaine - Vaughan Springs area, 22nd - 23rd April 1978.
Particulars of accommodation available from the Secretary.

BIRD RECORDS DURING FEBRUARY 1978.

Two spotted crakes were observed at the Convent corner - Lake Wendouree on the 5/2/78. These birds are rather rare in our district, and are only seen occasionally, mainly in the reeds and water lilies in the shallow water at the Convent corner.

One little bittern was also seen in the same locality on the same morning. It was flushed from the high reeds and flew over to the open lake and disappeared in the rushes. As the name implies this bittern is smaller than other bitterns. It is recognised by the greenish-black crown, back and tail. The neck and shoulders are chestnut coloured.

Eight Banded plovers were noticed on the 1/2/78 in the drainage water from the meat works at Alfredton. These plovers are not as common as the spur winged plover in our district, but occasionally flocks of up to 50 birds are observed.

A friend rang from Snake Valley and described a bird found in the creek there, that was new to him. He mentioned it being chestnut coloured with a large white plume from the nape which immediately identified it as a nankeen night heron. These birds are not common in our district, being recorded at odd times at Lake Wendouree, Mt. Beckworth and Gong Gong reservoir.

S. Bedggood.

EXCURSION PT. HENRY - OCEAN GROVE 5th February 1978.

Six cars made the trip to Geelong, where Mr. Jack Wheeler of Geelong F.N.C. met us, and showed us two varieties of the currajong trees in Johnstone Park. From there we journeyed to the salt works at Pt. Henry and observed a vast and varied number of birds. The banded stilts were there, large long-legged white birds with chestnut abdomen and breast band, brown-black wings, long thin black bill and pink legs. They breed in lakes north of the Flinders Ranges in S.A. Some other varieties were herons, pelicans, waders, mountain duck, curlew, sandpipers, pied and white-headed stilts, and the greenshanks which migrate to Siberia to breed. Quite a number of Japanese snipe were flushed from a grassy area.

RESEARCH WORK IN SELECTIVELY LOGGED FORESTS IN

CENTRAL VICTORIA.

The Mount Cole, Wombat and Macedon State Forests in west-central Victoria supply a variety of wood products, water and recreational opportunities to the people of nearby provincial and urban centres. In them, there is an apparent intensification of crown dieback and increased mortality that, in recent years, has caused concern to the Forests Commission.

Dieback affects trees at all stages of growth. E. obliqua, (messmate stringybark), E. viminalis (manna gum) and E. globulus subsp. bicostata (blue gum) are the main species affected, although other eucalypts and some Acacia species are affected. Many parts of the forests are at present only lightly affected by dieback, with scattered individuals and groups of trees dying.

Dieback symptoms are consistently associated with the presence of unidentified species of the fungus Armillaria. Armillaria spp. are a group of native fungi widespread in Victorian forests. The disease appears to be spread from infected root systems and stumps to other trees by root contacts. The fungus sometimes girdles the base of the tree causing death.

The Forests Commission, Victoria with the assistance of the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Forest Research is engaged in a research program to study the fungus in its native habitat. The program will investigate the biology of the fungus and forest management practices that may allow control of the disease. Clear felling of trees with stump treatments that are known, from elsewhere in the world, to assist in destroying the food base feeding the fungus are some treatments that will be tested.

The research plots at Mount Cole will involve clear falling of approximately 18 ha of forest. In the studies of disease behaviour pine seedlings will be used as bait as these are by far the best indicators of early stages of fungal activity. About a third of the test area will be planted temporarily to pine, with surviving pine seed-

lings being removed at the end of the experiments. Removal of the pine seedlings will be followed by regeneration of the experimental sites with native eucalypts.

Further information can be obtained on this topic from the Forests Commission's Divisional Office, 11 Lydiard Street South, Ballarat.

(By Courtesy Forests Commission)

SYLLABUS 1978 - 79. A comprehensive and interesting syllabus of meetings and excursions has been drawn up and will be available for distribution at the April meeting.

A VISIT TO WIRRIMBIRRA.

I was at Mittagong, N.S.W. during January, not one month after the disastrous fires which swept such large areas of the Blue Mountains, west and areas south of Sydney. On my return to Sydney I called in to see how "Wirrimbirra" had fared, having heard that it had been burnt out except for the dwellings. A small oasis of greenery around the buildings was all that was not burnt or scorched - a changed scene to when I visited the area in August 1976 when the bush was golden with the dozens of acacias planted in previous years.

Roger Thomas was busy in the nursery where he has a fine display of plants for sale. The shade house, with automatic spray system, was to have been the refuge during the fire - fortunately it was not used for that purpose. The east side of the railway line appeared to be brown and black. I walked one of the trails and by the creek the birds, mostly Rosellas and Eastern Shrike Tits were busy. A few days before my visit there had been 3" rain so the resilience of the bush must be visible now. It will be interesting to observe the germination of the species which require heat to initiate growth.

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They are very fast in flight, and breed in Japan, arriving here with first full moon in August and departing February-March.

THE OCEAN GROVE NATURE RESERVE is an area of 357 acres of natural bushland, controlled by the Geelong F.N.C. with a committee of management of nine. It is easily accessible down Grubb Rd., off the Geelong-Queenscliff Highway.

After visiting Pt. Henry, Mr. Jack Wheeler led us to the reserve where he gave us a short history of the area and told of plans for future development, before taking members along one of the several nature trails. There are areas planted specifically with acacia, grevillea and melaleuca, all with name stakes, but mostly it's virgin bush with hundreds of native shrubs and trees. About eleven acres are completely covered with grass trees.

On show inside the entrance are two large fossils, the bones of black whale at least 10,000 years old. George, the koala, recovering from an injured shoulder, was at home in his eucalypt, and a previously injured raven created some interest.

Perhaps there would have been more birds about had the weather been finer; some noted were red browed finch, grey currawong, blue wren, tree martin, yellow winged honeyeater, blue-winged parrot, white faced chat, and a beautiful sacred kingfisher. A perfect nest of the grey fantail had one egg in it.

Thanks go to Mr. Wheeler and his offsider, Mr. Owen Andrews; and we look forward to seeing peach jam on the market table at our next meeting Edna!!

E. Gray.

VICTORIAN F.N.C.A. CAMP-OUT

CRESWICK, SLATEY CREEK and SCHOOL OF FORESTRY.

To be held Labor Day week-end 11th - 13th March, 1978.
Excursion Saturday afternoon. Meeting 7.30 p.m.
Saturday 11th. Excursion Sunday 12th March.
Anyone interested is invited to attend.
Mr. Albert Perry (President) 15 Lillie Street, Ballarat.

"Wirrimbirra" is 90 hectares of bushland situated on the Hume Highway between Tahmoor and Bargo, N.S.W. 95 km. south of Sydney. Its main features are a native plant nursery, an environmental studies centre, cabins for overnight visits, small bookshop, native garden plants introduced from all over Australia and a large area of undeveloped bushland. It is managed by the David G. Stead Memorial Wildlife Research Foundation of Australia, which is a private non-profit organisation. Mr. Roger Thomas, a former B.F.N.C. member is the Sanctuary's Ranger, assisted by Mr. Bill Mackay.

Contributed by H. Burgess.

AUSTRALIAN ENDANGERED SPECIES.

BANDED HARE-WALLABY (*Lagostrophus fasciatus*)

The animal was first observed in 1699 on Dirk Hartog Island in Shark Bay, Western Australia, by William Dampier. Up to the turn of the century the animal is believed to have had a wide distribution in south Western Australia but has not been reported there since 1906. It is now believed to be extinct on the mainland, its decline being attributed to the clearing of scrubland for agriculture and competition from rabbits. There are still stable populations on Bernier and Dorre Islands in Shark Bay. The continued survival of the species relies on management of these islands as reserves.

DESCRIPTION: The Banded Hare-wallaby is one of a number of small wallabies in the family of Kangaroos (Macropodidae). It is one of only four living species of Hare-wallabies, so named because of their colour, hare-like speed, jumping ability and habit of sitting in well-formed hare-like squats. The Banded Hare-wallaby is easily distinguished from other hare-wallabies by its strikingly banded coloration and naked nose.

The fur, which is soft, thick and long is mainly a brown-grey except for the darker cross bands on the rump. The under parts are buffy white. The tapering tail is thinly haired. The size is variable and the body length is approximately 75 cm of which 30 cm is tail length.

ECOLOGY: Banded Hare-wallabies are sociable animals and may be found congregating under low hanging limbs of bushes and in dense thickets that often contain prickly or thorny species of Acacia bushes.

They are nocturnal and herbivorous, emerging from their retreats at night to feed on various plants and fruits. Little is known about their breeding habits but the litter size is one.

(Extract from Wildlife Research News. September 1977.)

B.R.A.C.E. Lecture

The lecture and field work - Bird Watching for Beginners - was organized by the Ballarat Regional Association for Continuing Education in collaboration with the Club for the weekend of February 18,19. Mr. Howard Jarman, lecturer on Ornithology for the Council of Adult Education, presented an illustrated lecture on the identification of birds of Central Victoria on the Saturday evening and continued his theme in the field during excursions on the following day. Some forty people attended the Lecture at which Mr. Jarman pointed out significant identification characteristics of many groups of birds. Approximately thirty observers visited two selected habitats for the extension of the lecture. The setting ponds of the Sewerage Plant provided an excellent site for close observation of a variety of water fowl and waders. The afternoon field work was marred by high temperatures, but the Candlebark and acacia forest south of Creswick provided some opportunity for the observation of bush birds. A tape recording of the evening lecture is available to interested members.

G.W.B.
